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Wedding Ceremonies

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Wedding

Ceremonies

WHETHER YOU'RE PLANNING a June wedding or planning to attend one, the ceremony will mean more to you if you understand its significance.

Perhaps the ceremony will be conducted in a church with which you're not familiar or it may be a ceremony you've never witnessed. Let's look at the three most commonly performed marriage ceremonies in our United States.

Roman Catholic Mass

The Roman Catholic Nuptial Mass is a definitely prescribed and strictly followed wedding ceremony. It may be celebrated only by a couple neither of whom has been married before. Low Mass takes about half an hour and is performed with one priest in attendance. "Missa Cantata" or High Mass usually consumes at least forty minutes and is, in large part, chanted. The most impressive of all Catholic rituals is the Solemn Mass—seldom seen except at very elaborate formal weddings. Here three priests, a celebrant, a deacon and a sub-deacon all sing a part of the mass with a full choir in attendance. Amid lighted candles and the fragrance of swinging incense burners, this ceremony continues for more than an hour.

The Catholic Church ceremony can be performed at the altar only when both bride and groom are Catholics. And since the Church does not recognize divorce, neither member may have been previously divorced. The couple is usually married in the bride's parish church. Before the wedding can take place banns must be proclaimed on three successive Sundays

in the churches of both bride and groom. A bann is an announcement of the intended marriage. (No banns are necessary if one party is non-Catholic. In that case, special dispensation from the bishop of the diocese is necessary for a church wedding. The ceremony may be performed in the rectory or priest's house.) On the day before the marriage, the bride and groom go to confession and on the marriage day receive Holy Communion. If they wait until the wedding day, the couple must start fasting the midnight before until after Communion as is the usual case.

The bride's father does not give her away. Instead, he retires to his pew after escorting her to the altar rail. A ring is used in the ceremony, but the priest must bless it before handing it to the groom.

Usually the entire party mount the altar steps into the sanctuary. Even fashionable ceremonies are subject to the rules of the individual church, however.

Jewish Ceremony

Most of the ceremony in the Orthodox Jewish wedding is conducted in Hebrew under a silken canopy or chupah (symbolizing the couple's new home). Only the bride and groom, best man and maid of honor stand under the canopy while the rest of the attendants take their usual places outside.

The colorful Orthodox Jewish ceremony is filled with symbolism. Consisting of "Seven Blessings," it is not in itself long, but is extended by special nuptial music and musical responses. The rabbi opens the service by blessing two cups of wine, one of which he hands to the groom who sips and then offers it to

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his bride. The Second Blessing and ring ceremony follow. In the Jewish religion, only a plain gold band with no diamonds may be used. The best man gives the ring to the rabbi who first asks in English, "Dost thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?" The groom then receives the ring, places it on the index finger of the bride's right hand, saying in both Hebrew and English, "Be thou consecrated unto me with this ring as my wife in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel." The bride may then switch her ring to the customary finger. It is at this point that the rabbi delivers a personal address to the bride and groom . . . a very important feature of the ceremony. The remaining blessings follow and the marriage certificate is read in Aramaic.

The Reformed Jewish wedding is similar to the Orthodox in most respects. However, no canopy is required for the ceremony. The Reform rabbi does not read the marriage certificate in Aramaic since it has no bearing on modern marriage.

A difference in Jewish and other weddings is that it is traditional in the Jewish wedding for the groom's father to escort him down the aisle. Both mothers also participate, walking together.

Protestant Ceremony

The Protestant ceremony varies according to the requirements of each of the different faiths. Protestant clergymen usually insist on speaking with the couple some time before the ceremony is to take place. During this talk, he satisfies himself as to the advisability of the match. If he feels that the marriage is unwise or that for some reason it is doomed to failure, he can refuse to perform the ceremony. Many churches will not permit remarriages except under special circumstances.

The length of the protestant service depends upon tradition and theological heritage of the denomination. A consistent custom is the use of scripture in the service since protestants believe that scripture is the only infallible faith in life. Prayer is always included in the Protestant ceremony.

Music in the Protestant churches differs, again, with the church and the location. Some churches are liberal concerning the music used, while others insist on only non-secular types of music.

by Barbara Cuher

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